

DEC 04 2013

### International Program/Exchange Evaluation Report

1. Arrival overseas/on-site orientation:

When I arrived in Japan I was able to take a bus directly to my dorm, but in the case that you can't, staying at a hostel is a cheaper alternative to a hotel until you can move into a more permanent residence.

There was an orientation at my dorm as well as at the school. The orientations covered pretty much everything, and it was very overwhelming, but thanks to RA's at the dorm as well as tutors assigned to you from the school, adapting was much easier.

2. Academics:

Classes at Aoyama are very different compared to the UW. The required Japanese languages classes are divided into speaking, listening, reading, and writing, but they often do not stick to one category. As for classes in Japanese that you can take with Japanese students, they are generally lectures with a final report or exam. As a Japanese person these are easy classes, but as an exchange student they can be very difficult. The teachers are very helpful (such as giving power point printouts/letting you write papers in English), so I would recommend speaking with them if you need help. Classes in English, however, tend to be easy (excluding economics) and have more of an American teaching style.

As for facilities, my only complaint is that they have several floors of computer rooms, but only half of them are ever open. This makes it frustrating when you need to print something out during lunch time, but all the computers are taken.

3. Housing:

There are several housing options. There are dormitories, apartments, and homestays. Aoyama will give you information about the apartments and homestays, but you are required to set them up yourself. Because of this I decided signing up for the dormitory through Aoyama would be the easiest. There are pros and cons for picking the dorm. Probably the most annoying thing about the female dorm is that it is almost an hour away from campus, and that there aren't many things to do in the town. I would still recommend the dorm though, because not only is there breakfast and dinner, but also other foreign exchange students and Japanese students. Along with the dorm mother and father and the RA's, the dorm has a very good community.

4. Program/exchange site:

The campus itself is very small, but also very nice. Because it is located in Shibuya (everything is in Shibuya), it is very convenient.

5. Health and safety:

A good thing about this area and Japan in general is that it is very safe. People will leave their things unattended, and no one will steal them. Health, on the other hand, has its pros and cons. If you catch a cold, you might have to go see a doctor for stronger medication because medicine you buy at the store is very weak. And if you want to go see a doctor, hospitals are often closed at inconvenient times. Also, summer in Japan can be dangerous, especially if you are not used to high temperatures and humidity. During my stay in Japan I caught several colds and suffered from heat exhaustion during summer, but the doctors are very helpful as well as the staff at Aoyama.

6. Cultural Aspects:

The dormitory was a great way to integrate into the culture. Even though it was not a homestay, it really was a family environment. Another opportunity I took advantage of was to become a Chat Leader at Aoyama. I was able to meet many Japanese students and learn a lot about Japan.

There are many cultural differences, but I found most of them to be positive. One difference I had to get used to is that most things from walking space to meal portions are small. Because Aoyama is in Shibuya, I feel that the Japanese people there are used to seeing foreigners, but during the second semester new Japanese students tended to gawk at the foreign exchange students on campus, though it was more amusing than offending.

7. Financial

There really is no 'best way' to access/transfer money from America. Everybody who had to deal with their banks had a hard time. I found that it was generally frowned upon to use credit cards for small purchases, and that I also couldn't use it for large bills such as the dorm fee. Debit cards are a good way, but it really depends on if the ATM accepts foreign cards or even your bank in particular. What I ended up doing was making a Japanese bank account (Aoyama helps with this) and having money transferred to there instead.

Expenses are too variable depending on the situation.

The only unexpected expenses I had were when I had to go to the doctor and when the dorm kept sending me bills with the wrong amounts. A good idea is to pay close attention to and keep all of your bills from the dormitory.

I used financial aid and I had no problems with it. The only issue was that most of my costs were upfront before I received financial aid, but I was able to divide up the tuition due.

8. Program/exchange administration

One of the frustrating things about being in Japan is that it is not easy to make contact with UW and you might have to wait a while for responses to important matters (as can be expected especially with the time difference). Before I left for Japan IPE was helpful with my application and advising, and during my study abroad were able to help me extend my stay at Aoyama.

Hopefully most of the questions/problems during the exchange will be related to Aoyama because the International Exchange Center is extremely helpful. People from the IEC came to the airport after I arrived in Japan, they helped me find a doctor, and if you have any problem the IEC can probably help you. One of the reasons I was able to adapt so well to Japan is because of their support.

9. Program/student type:

When I applied for this exchange, seeing that the requirement was to have taken a 4<sup>th</sup> year level Japanese class, I was under the impression that only more advanced speakers would do well. Certainly, being advanced is preferable in my opinion, but not completely necessary. Even though the school says their Japanese instruction classes start at intermediate, the lower level classes are very beginner. In order to take advantage of being able to take classes in Japanese on a different subject matter I would advise not being a beginner, but even then as long as a person has an interest in Japan, this is a good exchange.

10. Overall experience:

Overall, I think that my expectations were realistic considering I studied Japan for much of my academic life and made a long term goal to go to Japan. Because of this unpleasant culture shock was at a minimum. Academically, I was shocked and discouraged at how difficult the first class taught in Japanese I attended was. Fortunately I realized that psychology was not a good subject to start on and was able to take classes in subjects that I knew a little bit about. Personally, Japan exceeded my expectations. Despite my relief of departing Japan's humid summer and returning to Seattle weather, most of us on the exchange did not want to go back home and are planning to return.

Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan, Academic Year March 2008-March 2009

1) ARRIVAL OVERSEAS ORIENTATION

- a) If you are staying in the dorms you will be able to check in upon your arrival, however, if it is after the welcome period that the school designates then you will have to go there by yourself. I recommend sending your bags to your place of residence using an airport carrier service like Kuroneko from Narita so you do not have to carry your heavy bags along with you.
- b) The program orientation covered the basics on how to live in Japan, such as how to open a bank account, get a cell phone, pay your bills, etc, as well as information on the school and how to register for classes.

2) ACADEMICS

- a) In comparison to the University of Washington, the school is not as challenging. A student takes many classes, but usually only has a particular class once a week, and there is rarely any work outside of the classroom. Due to this reason, if the student wants to be challenged they should refrain from taking too many courses in English, and opt instead for ones in Japanese. Although the ease of classes makes the English ones incredibly boring, it is an asset for those not yet fluent in Japanese, as one can still keep up with the classes in Japanese. I recommend studying hard for the placement test, because it is hard to change once you are already placed, and you may be surprised by how you place. Teachers are generally standoffish, but it greatly depends on the class, and the Japanese language teachers are for the most part very friendly and willing to give extra help for students that need it. The study abroad office is extremely nice to exchange students, and I recommend going to them whenever you have a problem, because they will be more than willing to help. The library is small, but is a quite place to study if you need it, and the computer rooms are convenient especially if you do not have a printer and need to print your essays out.
- b) The quality of instruction was on the whole not as good as UW. The students do not really care about their classes, and the professors tend to ramble, or read off their notes, without regard for the students. However, there are some good classes where the teachers try to engage the students and the material is genuinely interesting, but in general the classes are fairly boring.
- c) I took an interesting course called 平和を考える 2 (Thinking about Peace 2) that covered the history and controversy surrounding Okinawa. The class had a different professor or guest speaker every week that talked about different topics such as military history, social history, folk music of Okinawa, the effect of the Japanese takeover of the islands, and the American occupation /continued presence. The class was conducted in Japanese, but usually not too difficult to follow. The topic of the course varies on the semester and the year. I also recommend taking a ゼミ or



seminar. I took one called cultural communication in English, and it was a really good way to meet Japanese people because these courses are smaller and require students to work with each other.

- d) My major is International Studies, and I enrolled as an exchange student in the department of International Politics, Economics and Communication, so most of the classes I took were related to culture, history or politics and therefore closely related to what I study at UW. However, most of the classes were not very difficult and did not transfer directly to my major, or contribute towards graduation. The Japanese classes did complete my minor in Japanese.

### 3) HOUSING

- a) When I was accepted to this university I was told of many options, such as homestay and apartments, but that the safest bet for a place to stay would be the dorms. Unfortunately, if you stay in the dormitory you have to sign a contract to stay for six months if you are studying abroad for the academic year, which restricts your ability to get alternate housing if you do not like the dorm.
- b) I initially chose the dorm, because I did not want to be worried about finding housing when I was in Japan, and it was the only option that guaranteed I would have somewhere to stay when I accepted my offer of admission. The school does not own dorms close to campus, and uses a private dorm company that has various locations around Tokyo. At the time of my study abroad the women's dorm was located in Eda, Kanagawa, about 40 minutes away from Shibuya by train. The local Denentoshi line is extremely crowded in the morning, and the dorm is 16 stops away on the regular trains, making for an uncomfortable commute. However, the dorm does provide meals for breakfast and dinner, which makes it much cheaper than guesthouses or apartments. I eventually moved when my contract was up to a guesthouse in Sangenjaya, which was extremely expensive (around 1,000/month), and owned by a company that was hard to work with (Sakura House).
- c) I would recommend exploring all your options before you decide to stay somewhere. Everything has its positive and negative aspects so you will have to decide for yourself what is best for you. Some of my friends loved the dorm because it was much cheaper and they could get to know the other exchange students. I, however, enjoyed living in a nice neighborhood in the city and being closer to the school. The dorm also has a curfew, which is not always enforced, but it was nice not having to worry about whether I would have someone who could let me in if they had decided to lock the door.

### 4) EXCHANGE SITE

- a) I think one of the best things about Aogaku is where it is located. It is convenient to all the areas that most students hang out at, and is a quick train ride away from pretty much everywhere else you would want to go. The immediate area is surrounded by stylish cafes and boutiques, which are way too expensive for casual shopping. It is within walking distance to Harajuku and Shibuya, where many exchange students spend the majority of their time.

### 5) HEALTH AND SAFETY

- a) Japan is an extremely safe country, and I never felt unsafe walking around even at 3am by myself. Obviously, one should use common sense for theft, because it is on the relative rise in Japan, but I never heard of anyone having anything stolen from them. I actually had more instances of people stopping me to tell me I had dropped something (including money). I also lost my cell phone and was able to recover it within a couple days. In general I was told that most Americans think that Japanese medicine is too weak for them, but I'm sensitive to American medicine, and found that Japanese cold medicine helped me when I was sick. However, I would bring toothpaste and deodorant, because I was never satisfied with these products in Japan. For everything else, Japanese products were fine.

6) CULTURAL ASPECTS

- a) I had joined a club, which is a great way to meet people that you would not normally meet. Although it is not difficult to make friends with the Japanese students interested in foreign countries, I found it harder to meet regular Japanese students. Through clubs and parties I was able to make friends with people that had never been outside of Japan let alone speak English, which greatly improved my understanding of Japan as well as my Japanese. I also recommend doing all the cultural programs that the school offers, because they were often heavily discounted and fun experiences.
- b) While, there are social differences, if you are patient and willing to observe and understand, it is fairly easy to adapt to them.

7) FINANCIAL

- a) To get money from the US I just used my US Bank debit card through the postal service ATMs. There are two right next to the school, so it is relatively easy to withdraw money for a minimal charge.
- b) I think it is important to be realistic and understand that Tokyo is very, very expensive, and I probably spent a lot more money than I would have if I did not have a part-time job teaching English. Many of my friends had money troubles to the point where they were not able to go out with everyone else, and would either eat the dorm food or cup ramen every day. When I lived in the guesthouse I probably spent \$ 1,700/month including rent, food and personal expenses. I recommend saving a lot of money, applying for scholarships, and getting a part-time job, in order to really enjoy your time abroad.
- c) My cell phone was much more expensive than I initially had allotted per month. Towards the end I used the internet and messaging quite heavily, and it was probably around \$100/month. Some of my friends only paid around \$40/month using the same company, so I'm sure you can get the bill to be lower I'm just not sure how they did it. Transportation is a lot more expensive than I thought it was going to be too.
- d) n/a

8) PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION

- a) I did not have much contact with IPE once I left, but before they were responsive to my concerns and helped prepare me for departure. It would have been nice if the

IPE would maintain more contact with students, because one of my friends are trouble with the administration in Japan, and the IPE did not help at all.

b) n/a

9) PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE

a) I would recommend this program for students that speak Japanese to at least an immediate level, because the beginner classes, and English language classes are really boring. Tokyo is really fun, and Japan can be more than just a place to find clothes and anime if you want it to be.

10) OVERALL EXPERIENCE

a) Obviously it has been said before, but this was an irreplaceable experience that I think is rewarding if you are willing to work hard and experience new things. I think it's important for anyone interested to understand that Tokyo is a very, very expensive city, and you must be prepared to be realistic about how much you will need to spend.

OCT 26 2009

Study in Japan: Aoyama Gakuin University Direct Exchange in Tokyo 2008-2009

### 1. Arrival Overseas/ On-Site Orientation

- a. Aoyama Gakuin provided assistance at the airport and at the metro train station in order to help me arrive at my dormitory the very first night I arrived in Tokyo. Otherwise, through experience, I would recommend searching online for a temporary youth hostel in Ueno or nearby if one is not able to immediately check into their dormitory.
- b. The orientation at Aoyama Gakuin and at the two separate dormitories covered everything I would need to know about living abroad, City Hall locations, rules and regulations of the school, Japan, and the dorms. It was very thorough. It also had lot of phone numbers and contact information for each person I would need to contact at the school.

### 2. Academics

- a -Classroom structure: The size of the class was about 20 students or less, which is less than most of the introductory classes at UW.
  - b- Instruction: Class consisted of mostly a lecture format with minimal student interaction. That did, however, depend upon the teacher and the type of class. History classes tended to be more scripted while other language classes involved discussions.
  - c- Teacher/Student Relations: There wasn't the same level of connection that UW students and teachers have at Aoyama Gakuin. Teachers tended to teach for the day, then resided in office and then went home. I rarely saw professors about, talking, and engaged with students like I have at UW.
  - d- Grading/exams: Coursework at the college level was easier than UW's. Although there were less daily homework assignments, class participation and the final exam at the end of the quarter determined your entire grade. There was a lot of emphasis placed upon doing very well at the end of each term.
  - e- Administration: As effective as I could hope for. The International Cultural Center at AGU was very helpful and efficient.
  - f- Library, computer, and classroom facilities: The library was very small and was not as convenient as UW's. The technology in the classrooms, though, was phenomenal. Projectors, wide screen TVs, slide shows, all digital. About the same level of UW's if not better.
- Quality and content of instruction: Lacking when compared to UW's. Not quite as challenging as I would hope for when paying the high cost of tuition. AGU, however, is respected and regarded as a very serious institution. But so is UW. I found that the coursework was useful for my knowledge and future plans, but the real experience of being abroad in Japan was what happened outside of the classroom anyway.
- Recommended Courses and Instructors: Japanese taught by Prof. Mori, American Law classes taught by Prof. Givens, International Business classes taught by Prof. Duignan.
- All courses taken abroad were used to satisfy my requirements for graduation and also were significant for my cultural understanding of Japan and the Japanese. (Jackson School, Asian Studies, Japan concentration).

### 3. Housing

- a. Dormitories offsite (about 30-40 minutes) away from the school, home stay, apartments.
- b. Dormitories, the cost.
- c. Dormitories, for the cost.

### 4. Program/Exchange Site

The campus is located in downtown bustling Shibuya, which is much like the NYU campus in New York. It is the midst of a city and as soon as you exit the classroom and walk a few hundred yards your looking at a busy highway and shops and lots of moving pedestrians coming and going in and out of Shibuya's young fashion/shopping district. The campus isn't as beautiful as UW's, there's a lot more concrete architecture, but there were some old, very well

maintained buildings, but no classes were held in them.

#### 5. Health and Safety:

No health or safety concerns, Japan is pretty safe in that regard. Probably any area for young/ fresh study abroad students to avoid at the late, late hours of the night is the drinking/red light district or Kabuki-chou during the izakaya and drinking part of the night, but anyone who knows enough to study abroad in Tokyo should already know enough to be careful anyway.

#### 6. Cultural Aspects:

a- I was a member of the Aoyama Gakuin Hiking Club and met members with similar interests as me, we met and exercised each week, had drinking and dining parties at night after classes, etc. I went on the ICC (AGU's IP&E) trips outside of Tokyo to different parts on bus tours and visited traditional locations and took part in demonstrations. I also went to parties and met other Japanese students at AGU and made friendships. My girlfriend was also the most important factor in cultural integration. Doing things in the city, shopping, dining, talking, traveling around to destinations, meeting the family, friends, and doing activities were probably the most rewarding things I could imagine and hope for in a direct exchange program abroad in a different country through the UW.

b- Cultural problems: None, I've been to Japan several times before and am familiar with the culture.

#### 7. Financial:

a- I used a Visa debit bank card and used an Atm to withdraw money (USD) from my bank account that came out of the machine (for a fee) in Japanese Yen.

b- Pretty expensive per month. Rent, food, transportation, phone bill, extra costs and activities: 700 to 800 per month.

c- The huge price of the phone bill if you use it A LOT. Which might very well happen.

d- No problems with financial aid.

#### 8. Program/Exchange Administration:

a- IP&E administered my direct exchange program. All the steps to applying and getting accepted by AGU were very helpful and efficient, and I'm very thankful. Beyond that point, once in Japan, I spent the next ten months doing everything on my own and it all worked out very well. No complications. I'm very happy.

#### 9. Program/ Student Type:

This program is best suited for students who have an adequate knowledge of Japanese culture and the Japanese language. I would only recommend AGU for students in the Japanese studies/language program because you can really gain a lot from prior knowledge brought with you. The location is phenomenal and the opportunities for students is endless. You can take advantage of so many things in the heart of Tokyo. I would hope that future students accepted and who take part in this program are serious about the program and experience, and love Japan and Japanese culture.

#### 10. Overall Experience:

Having already been to Japan three times and as a Japan studies major, my expectations (both academic and personal) were met and exceeded. I was happy with the AGU experience and the opportunities inside the classroom and the wonderful classes I had with Prof Mori. The trip surpassed my expectations with the opportunities presented outside of the classroom. Being able to form friendships and bonds allowed me to go up north to Fukushima for Christmas and New Years! , for example, and to see parts of the culture and Japanese family that I wouldn't be able to otherwise. What someone really gains from this experience, is what they have the will to do outside of the classroom in meeting other people and doing things in the city, in the museums, in the restaurants, bars, national

parks, and everywhere else around Tokyo.



MAY 29 2008

## IP&E PROGRAM EVALUATION FORM

Aoyama Gakuin University (AGU), Tokyo  
Spring 2007-Winter 2008

### 1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION

Regarding accommodations upon arrival of exchange students, I chose to set up an arrangement at one of the dorms associated with Aoyama Gakuin. The IPE assisted in providing me with the information about available dorms, and I could make living plans a couple months prior to leaving for Tokyo. At Narita airport, if chosen by the exchange student, volunteer tutors from AGU will greet him/her and ensure that a safe trip to the student's place of residence is made. In my case, I was met by a very friendly tutor who accompanied another exchange student and myself to our dorm. At the time, I was not yet familiar with the train system, which can be overwhelming at first glance, so this was very helpful. Also, if the exchange student has any bags that are quite burdensome they can be delivered from the airport to his/her residence via baggage delivery station. Consult tutor for this option, but the luggage will not arrive until the next day, so setting aside at least one night's worth of sleeping attire and bathroom supplies is recommended.

Program orientation was quite beneficial, from both AGU and UW. After obtaining eligibility to enter AGU's program, the students participating in the program received the chance to meet some of the AGU students who were studying at UW. From this encounter, I was able to ask questions relating to student life in order to prepare for any contrasts between those in UW and AGU. On AGU's side, the orientation began two days after arriving in Tokyo. Some of the other exchange students, in my dorm, were already entering their second semester, so they offered assistance in buying train passes, and which trains were necessary to reach our destination. Throughout the following two weeks, we were instructed how to register for courses, set up bank accounts, and went on a few excursions. If there was anything that we failed to understand we were more than welcome to visit AGU's exchange programs office or ask help from our tutors.

## **2. ACADEMICS**

This aspect of the Japanese university system may seem disappointing to students who are accustomed to the more Q&A or discussion oriented class structures. In most cases, for a regular curriculum class that is taught in Japanese, ninety-nine percent of class time will be lecture. If a course instructed in Japanese and a desire to stay involved in the material is an important factor, I suggest that the subject be something the student already finds interesting. Japanese calligraphy was enjoyable for me. Although the professor spoke extremely fast and colloquially, I observed the actions of him and the other students and could generally grasp what tasks I was required to do. In addition, he was empathetic to my situation as the only student with no history in calligraphy, so he was not very strict.

For classes facilitating a participatory environment, similar to that of UW, I would suggest attending a seminar, or zemi. You still receive credit, and the class time focuses more on discussion regarding assigned readings from the week prior. Another option is to attend a course instructed by a professor with a western-based education. The two professors I suggest are Evanoff and Duignan. The subjects covered were very interesting on their own, but the enthusiasm from the professors made them even more enjoyable. These classes were attended by regular Japanese students, so fear of isolating oneself from making Japanese friends was not an issue. Regarding the grading system of the majority of classes, attendance counts toward the final grade. The library and computer facilities were adequate, but the library is not open 24 hours. Also, I do not recall having any on-campus wireless access for my laptop.

## **3. HOUSING**

Mentioned previously, I opted to make accommodations at a dorm associated with AGU. This decision had positive and negative outcomes. Among those positive, breakfast and dinner were prepared by the staff six days a week, the rent was inexpensive, and it gave me the opportunity to wade in the waters of Japanese culture before jumping in. The negative aspects I encountered included living on the same floor with only exchange students. This was a problem for me because it stunted my ability to interact with the Japanese residents, and the noise late at night was problematic. In addition, the roundtrip commute to and from school totaled about 90 minutes.

After feeling more comfortable about living in Japan, I decided to move out of the dorm and found an inexpensive room, online, in a share-house that was closer to school and was inexpensive. Although these are rented out mainly to foreigners I had already made a number of Japanese friends, so I did not really deprive myself from Japanese language practice. Unfortunately, the reason for the low price of the room was because the building was old and infested with cockroaches. On average, I had to “take care of” at least one a day. Upon my visit to the building before signing, I saw no indication of this infestation, and the age of the building was no bother to me. Two months later, I found an apartment online, and it was considerably more expensive than the previous place, but it was much nicer. It had a bathroom, as opposed to a shared bathroom, a kitchen...and no cockroaches. From my experience and from those of other exchange students who moved out on their own, it is pretty fair to say that you get what you pay for. I recommend living both in the dorm and independently. This way the student will not miss out on either experience.

#### **4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE**

AGU is located in a very energetic and busy area of Tokyo. The school is located between Shibuya and Harajuku. In Shibuya, there are many Japanese-style bars, karaoke plazas, and great restaurants (foreign and Japanese). Harajuku is famous for its trend-setting fashions and clothing stores. Because the entertainment is so close to campus, students can cut loose after classes with their Japanese friends and practice language skills in a comfortable and enjoyable environment.

#### **5. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Although exchange students are enforced to obtain a national health insurance card I never witnessed anybody needing to use one. It is inexpensive, and if an emergency does arise it will be essential to avoid paying a lot for medical bills. The AGU exchange office and tutors will help with obtaining this. As for safety, Tokyo is generally a very safe area when compared to Seattle, but I would still recommend traveling in groups, late at night.

#### **6. CULTURAL ASPECTS**

Integration into the culture was not very difficult. Because AGU assigns exchange students tutors they will already have a friend to give tips about which places are fun. Usually,

groups of tutors and students would go out for karaoke or a drink, after school. During that time, some of the tutors' friends would also participate, so building social networks and friendships was not a great obstacle. As for learning the culture and language, I suggest spending time with Japanese friends. In order to have them critique any speech mistakes or let the student know of any cultural "don'ts" that s/he may be doing unaware the student will probably need to ask them a few times because they will avoid the risk of making the student lose face. Also, I have seen exchange students only spend time with other exchange students because they were afraid to leave their "comfort zone." Because of this I saw no improvement in their grasp of the Japanese language and no attempt to integrate into the Japanese culture.

I encountered a few instances of stereotyping. One that I experienced regularly was the assumption, by some Japanese people, that because I am a white westerner I have no ability to speak or understand Japanese. Several times, I would go to a restaurant or bar with a couple Asian American friends whose level of Japanese was the same as mine. The host or hostess would instinctively speak to my friends instead of me. We would later laugh about it, but for some reason I still have trouble with this.

## **7. FINANCIAL**

Regarding the access of money from the US, I found it was easiest to use the ATMs at the numerous post offices. At these, American bankcards can be used, and there are a few post offices conveniently located near the AGU campus. Citi Bank can also be used to access American accounts, but they are not as commonly found as the post office. In my case, I could not transfer any funds to my Sumitomo bank account. My Bank of America representative said that international transferring of funds was not something they performed, and financial aid from UW could only be transferred to an American bank, so knowing the hours and locations of post offices will be advantageous.

To support my stay in Japan I received financial aid from UW and the JASSO scholarship from the government, so money was not really an issue. If the student plans to receive financial aid while staying in Japan, I suggest applying for an increase in aid at the UW financial aid office because cost of living is quite high in Tokyo, but s/he should try to do this a couple months before leaving America, so the office has ample time to make the adjustments. For the JASSO, I would consult Anni Fuller, or whoever may be UW's exchange

program advisor, about eligibility. If received, the monthly stipend from this scholarship equates to approximately \$800 per month with the first month equaling \$1,500. Also, because the Japanese two-semester system is the same as three quarters at UW, financial aid from Spring quarter will need to be stretched out until reception of aid for Fall quarter. Summer quarter aid will not be disbursed.

## **8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION**

The IP&E at UW was very helpful with the preparations to study abroad. I was informed of nearly everything I needed to know regarding the program, living situations, and student life. If I had any questions response times were short. Honestly, I cannot recall anything that could be done better.

## **9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE**

If the student is pursuing knowledge of, and a better ability to speak, Japanese in an energetic environment then AGU will meet his/her needs. If s/he has already studied some of Japan's cultural characteristics a few of the mandatory classes will be review and seem to drag on, but they are not difficult.

There are two separate campuses. The Tokyo campus has no science or engineering courses. Those are covered at the Sagamihara campus. As far as I know, Sagamihara is about an hour, by train, from the Tokyo campus. Besides this, I have no information or experience with this campus.

## **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE**

Having already been to Japan twice before, my expectations as to what I would encounter were met. I made and still maintain many great friendships. During vacation breaks in and between semesters, I traveled to various parts of the country and had the chance to absorb the different sceneries and observe several festivals. For a brief period, I did become a little homesick, but I was not alone. Many of the other students felt the same way. Despite this, I had a wonderful experience and would do it again in a heartbeat!!



JUL 27 2015

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## INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

**Your Name:**

**Name of Study Abroad/Exchange Program:** Aoyama Gakuin University Exchange

**Quarter(s) of Participation:** Fall, Winter, Spring, Half of Summer

**E-mail Address:**

### 1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

Tsutsujigaoka Student House dormitory.

b. If your program/exchange had an orientation, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt?

This orientation covered how to get a cell phone in Japan and a bank account, as well as the necessities and requirements for class registration, daily living, and other similar topics. It helped me adapt by giving me documents that were useful whenever I needed them.

### 2. ACADEMICS:

a. Please evaluate the instruction you received abroad. Compare the following to the University of Washington's system:

- classroom structure

Varied from teacher to teacher, but always followed the syllabus. Similar to UW.

- instruction

On a similar playing field to UW courses.

- teacher/student relations

When it came to the smaller classes, there was a stronger teacher/ student relationship.

Similar to the University of Washington's system.

- grading/exams

More lenient when it came to grading papers and daily participation than UW, but exams were still the same as the Husky domain.

- administration

Because of how small it was, the administration felt more close knit than the majority of UW.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

Because of how close all the buildings were to each other, there was a strong essence of convenience amongst the main campus. Very much like UW, as there was almost always a computer and classroom available for use.

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.



I felt that the quality and content of instruction were not particularly strong (except for Global Business and European Economics). However, when discontinuities occurred in relation to the schedule, the teachers were adaptive, and changed accordingly.

**c. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?**

Global Business would be the course to go for. Yes, it is on Saturdays, but the instructor is an Irish teacher from the EU, and gives up to date information on the conflicts happening globally.

**d. How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?**

Considering how I am a Japanese major, most of my course work was related to the knowledge of Japan, Japanese history, and the improvement of speaking, reading, and writing Japanese.

### **3. HOUSING:**

**a. What housing options were available to you?**

Dormitory, apartments, shared house, and home stay were the options available to me.

**b. Which did you choose, and why?**

Dormitory, because it cost me 70,000 yen per month for electricity, bathing, internet, one room accommodation, and even breakfast and dinner.

**c. What would you recommend?**

Dormitory definitely. The cheaper option in the long run.

### **4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:**

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

The main Aoyama campus was rather on the short side: having everything close together in such a small space. That being said, there were several tall buildings, with building 17 being the main building on campus. There's also two row of trees near the front gate, and there's also a sports center off to the side with a pool.

As for the community, because the campus is in Shibuya/Omotesando, there are various shops surrounding the campus. In front of the school is the main road, and across the street is the EU school building. Also, on Saturdays and Sundays there's a Farmers market in front of the EU school, which is really convient.

## **5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study abroad experience.

Theft was not a serious problem here in Japan. Japan is relatively safe place to live, to the point where even children are traveling alone on the train without anyone worrying. For unsafe districts, Roppongi feels that would be the case, considering the party life during the night hours.

## **6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:**

**a.** How did you integrate into the culture and meet members of the community?

(e.g., clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

I did this through clubs and bars. However, the main integrator was actually through working as a tutor for Lancul (an English café) and private tutoring.

**b.** Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them.

(e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

Yes, there were plenty of cultural differences. One was people speaking English to me first, as they assumed (although correctly) that I knew English. However, it felt as if they thought I only knew English, for I do know how to speak Japanese, and would like to practice it. Easy way to address this was to speak Japanese back. Usually they get the message.

Even though there were cultural differences, they dissolved after a short amount of time, for I became accustomed to my new living situation rather quickly.

## **7. FINANCIAL:**

**a.** What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?

The best way I found was using Japan Post atm's, for they are in many locations, and Visa debit cards from the US do work. As for large bill payments, I used Western Union for the job.

**b.** How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

In my situation:

Rent: 70,000 yen

Transportation: 2,870 yen (if you go for the student discount at the Keio office in Shibuya station).

Food: 5,000 yen minimum.

**c.** Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

Japanese Government Insurance.

Even after having UW Study abroad insurance and my family's insurance plan, I still had to pay for this plan. Cost 1,000 yen per month.

d. If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any problems? If so, how did you address them?

Yes there were. The biggest problem was the fact that, due to the study abroad being a semester system but UW a quarter system, there wasn't enough money to pay for housing on time. As for how I addressed the issue, it wasn't me who solved it, but my parents. They ended up incurring a \$9,600 parental plus loan to pay for the trouble.

#### **8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:**

a. If the IP&E administered your program/exchange, please comment on the effectiveness of the office's services. What service could be improved?

The biggest help of the IP&E was the constant contact with supervisor Shannon R. Quinn, who helped with most of the issues and problems that arose during preparation for the program. Sadly, I don't know of any service that would need of improvement.

b. If the IP&E did not administer your program, please evaluate the program's administration, both in the U.S. and abroad.

#### **9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:**

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited.

This program is best suited for those who desire to improve their Japanese, or are in the Japanese major. Significantly helps with improving language skills, but does require separating from non-Japanese people from time to time to get the full experience.

#### **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

I didn't have any expectations when I started this program. However, during the program, I needed to know which classes would count as 4<sup>th</sup> year credit, and which would not. I checked before-hand at my department about which classes would work, but here's the kicker. Because classes may or may not update from time to time, my department was unsure whether or not a certain course could count as 4<sup>th</sup> year credit (even if it did so in the past). Frustrating this was, for I didn't get into level 4 Japanese during my first semester at Aoyama, so it was paramount that I should get the rest during my second semester.

My expectation: that my department would know exactly which courses would count, and which wouldn't. And to be honest, this was an unrealistic expectation, for things change from time to time, and this wasn't in their control. They're human, after all.



AUG 24 2015

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## INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

**Your Name:**

**Name of Study Abroad/Exchange Program:** Aoyama Gakuin Direct Exchange

**Quarter(s) of Participation:** Spring/Summer 2015

**E-mail Address:**

### 1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

**a.** Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

I initially stayed at the Apa Hotel in Kabukicho, Shinjuku while I was hunting for an apartment. The neighborhood is disreputable enough to raise some eyebrows while being nowhere near as dangerous as even the safest suburb in Seattle. Great soup shop just outside, too. If you have family or friends in the area to stay with while you're searching for accommodations, that's obviously the ideal solution, but the dollar is so strong right now that hotels are not terribly expensive. Book in advance on [jalan.net](http://jalan.net) for better prices.

**b.** If your program/exchange had an orientation, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt?

The orientation covers things like setting up your bank account and purchasing a cell phone—things that were largely useless to me as I had done them independently in the week prior to orientation—as well as how to register for classes. Aoyama Gakuin has something of a complicated computer system (the matrix password thing is just a nightmare) so I was grateful for the help navigating it.

### 2. ACADEMICS:

**a.** Please evaluate the instruction you received abroad. Compare the following to the University of Washington's system:

- classroom structure
- instruction
- teacher/student relations
- grading/exams
- administration
- library, computer, and classroom facilities

Classes are held in the lecture style with students tacitly discouraged from asking questions. Teachers give interesting lectures but many are prone to digressions. Teachers are friendly though how much interaction they have with students varies individually and grad students will always be prioritized over undergrads. Cannot speak to grading as I have not yet received my grades.

Classrooms are cleaner than UW and usually better-supplied, library is well-stocked though significantly smaller than UW, computer rooms are almost always crowded but the wait is short.

**b.** Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.



Instruction varies widely depending on the teacher but in most cases students are not allowed to ask questions during lecture, and if a teacher asks if anyone has any questions, it is because they are looking to end class early. Save questions for after class.

c. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

This really depends on your interests; Aoyama has a solid classical literature selection and I picked exclusively from those classes.

d. How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?

UW does not offer very much in the way of pre-modern Japanese literature, having only one professor who specializes in this field, so I was able to expand my studies substantially and get a more in-depth treatment of many texts at once. A comparable selection of classes at UW would require multiple quarters to accomplish due to the dearth of instructors.

### **3. HOUSING:**

a. What housing options were available to you?

Dorm or self-arranged sharehouses/apartments/etc.

b. Which did you choose, and why?

I chose to arrange an apartment and live alone because I am 26 years old and have no business living in a dorm that has an 11 PM curfew. Also, while the boys' dorm has a meal plan, no such courtesy is offered to the girls.

c. What would you recommend?

It is more expensive and more of a hassle to arrange your own apartment—you must have a solid grasp of Japanese already to do this, as contracts can be tricky—but it is so, so worth it to have your own space to retreat to when you need to decompress.

### **4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:**

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

Beautiful, green campus—mix of old and new buildings. There's a morning mass at 10:30 but attendance is not mandatory and the time is best spent popping down the street for a coffee. The campus is only a few minutes' walk from stylish Omotesando—dress well and go down to Ann Demeulemeester and Maison Margiela! After all, trying things on is always free entertainment. If you need a make-up touchup midday, duck into MAC and let the shop staff do you up in testers.

The area around Aoyama can be sort of jarring in a class-shock way—you'll never see so many LV bags and Louboutins in your life!—but luxury brands are very reasonably-priced secondhand in Japan, so if you're willing to budget it out carefully, you can bring home some impressive souvenirs.

### **5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study abroad experience.

None. Japan is vastly safer than America. I particularly recommend that girls go to Japan because the Seattle catcalling problem is nonexistent here and it was very refreshing to go out in public and NOT experience sexual harassment.

### **6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:**

- a.** How did you integrate into the culture and meet members of the community?  
(e.g., clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

My departmental supervisor at the UW sent ahead letters of introduction for me to two teachers at Aoyama whom he considers friends. Both these teachers were very gracious about folding me into their social orbits and introducing me to other professors and graduate students, as well as offering help should I run into any difficulty adjusting to life in Japan.

I also joined a sports club and attended practice regularly. Going to practice and tournaments and after-parties made up the bulk of my social life, particularly because students from nearby universities would attend our practices as guests.

- b.** Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them.  
(e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

This wasn't so much an issue for me as I'm half-Japanese and most people, upon discovering this fact, treated me as they would a normal Japanese person.

The weirdest thing to adjust to was, honestly, my lack of fear. There's a huge epidemic of catcalling in downtown Seattle and I had truly forgotten what it was to walk through a city without some measure of anxiety. In my last two years living in Seattle, I've never gone more than about three days without a man catcalling me, making unwanted sexual remarks, etc. That never happened to me in Japan.

## **7. FINANCIAL:**

- a.** What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?

Use the international ATM in 7-11, it's the least hassle.

- b.** How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

Rent: I paid ¥89500/month for my apartment, which is less than I'd pay for an apartment of equivalent size in Seattle. More expensive than the dorms, yes, but being able to be alone at the end of the day is definitely worth it to me. If you are introverted, this is probably the best option.

Food: I drink a fair bit and I like to eat well. It depends on how much you go out and where you go. There were weeks I didn't go out much and spend less than ¥100, and weeks where I'd go out four nights and spend about ¥250, 300. If you cook at home you can certainly get by on ¥100/week. I budgeted about ¥10000 a month so that I could treat myself to oysters and fancy cocktails, and generally finished the month under budget. This sounds crazy but remember that 1) raw vegetables are vastly cheaper in Japan than Seattle and 2) at the time I am in Japan, the exchange rate was about ¥120 to \$1. It's very, very easy to eat healthy cheaply here.

Transportation: Use your student ID to get a commuter pass! Mine was from Otsuka to Shibuya on the Yamanote line, which cost under \$200 for six months and conveniently covered most of the places I went regularly anyway. You'll have to top up the e-purse on your transit card to go outside your commuter-pass area, but it saves you loads of money in the long run. I personally didn't need to go outside the commuter-pass coverage zone very often, but it's going to vary depending on where you live.

- c.** Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

If you join a club you may be expected to go to a camp or an "away game," which can incur travel and hotel expenses.

d. If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any problems? If so, how did you address them?

Because I was at spring/summer quarters, my spring quarter grades did not post due to the classes not being complete yet. As a result, UW Financial Aid refused to disburse my summer aid. I had to purchase Skype credit for international calls and drag myself out of bed at five in the morning to get everything sorted out.

#### **8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:**

a. If the IP&E administered your program/exchange, please comment on the effectiveness of the office's services. What service could be improved?

I felt IPE e-mail response time was slow, but as a general rule did not rely on IPE to do much for me.

b. If the IP&E did not administer your program, please evaluate the program's administration, both in the U.S. and abroad.

N/A

#### **9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:**

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited.

If you have enough language skills to live and orchestrate your studies independently this is a great program for you. I don't recommend this program if you aren't self-motivated or haven't yet decided on a major.

#### **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

I came to Japan expecting very little oversight from both Aoyama Gakuin and UW, and found this to be accurate.

Academically I feel that I've received a good sample of what I can expect if I continue in my current field of study.

I don't feel that this was a source of huge personal growth, but I visited Japan frequently when I was younger and have family here, so I wasn't surprised by much. The experience would probably vary for someone of a different background. I did make more personal connections and forge more relationships than I expected to, and I hope that I can hold onto that.

SEP 22 2015

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## INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

**Your Name:**

**Name of Study Abroad/Exchange Program:** Aoyama Gakuin University Direct Exchange

**Quarter(s) of Participation:** Autumn 2014-Spring 2015

**E-mail Address:**

### 1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

**a.** Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

I really recommend Tsutsujigaoka Student house dorm. It is a bit far from the campus, about 45 minutes, but is a very good place to live. Breakfast and dinner are provided for you. There are excellent, bathing, laundry, and dining facilities. Free Wifi in the lounge. Internet in the rooms is free if you have a laptop. The food served is included in the tuition and is delicious.

**b.** If your program/exchange had an orientation, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt? The orientation covered what is needed to live in Japan. The school also provides a tutor for you if you need help getting around Tokyo. I found it very convenient and helpful. I learned where I had to go and what I had to do in order to have a bank account, cell phone, and medical insurance in Japan.

### 2. ACADEMICS:

**a.** Please evaluate the instruction you received abroad. Compare the following to the University of Washington's system:

- classroom structure- Average
- instruction-Depending on the Teacher, Poor to Excellent
- teacher/student relations- Above Average
- grading/exams-Above Average
- administration-Excellent
- library, computer, and classroom facilities-Excellent

**b.** Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

The quality and content of instruction depends greatly on the teacher. I had teacher who did a great job and taught me a lot while others were boring and didn't inspire me to learn at all. An example of this is the translation classes I took. The teacher who taught Japanese translation and culture gave interesting lectures and assignments. We discusses important issues about translation in class as well.

I was very interested and inspired because of this. The teacher who taught translation of Japanese literature was very boring and only simply went through our translation homework in monotonous manner. That is why I highly recommend you talk to Japanese students to find out which classes are good and which teachers are decent at their job.

**c.** Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

Yes. Global Business is taught by Mr. Duignan. It is in English but you can learn a great deal and he is by far one of the best teachers at the school. I also recommend Japanese Translation and Culture. The teacher found interesting ways to help us understand theories and importance of translation.

**d.** How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?

I gained more skill and a deeper understanding of the Japanese languages through the classes I took. I also learned a great deal more about the Japanese culture and way of life and how that related to the language.

### **3. HOUSING:**

**a.** What housing options were available to you?

I had a the option of choosing between Tsutsujigaoka house, another dorm in a different location, and finding an apartment on my own.

**b.** Which did you choose, and why?

I chose Tsutsujigaoka house because it was just more convenient to live there. I didn't want to deal with the process of finding an apartment and the rent at the dorm I chose was very reasonable.

**c.** What would you recommend?

I would recommend Tsutsujigaoka student house for any male student studying at Aoyama Gakuin University.

### **4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:**

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

The campus is very beautiful. It is small compared to UW Seattle but relatively large for a Japanese college. The surrounding area is very lively. It is a rather expensive area called Shibuya. There is a beautiful park and famous temple about 20 away on foot. There are many good restaurants and stores there as well.

### **5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study abroad experience.

I believe Japan is very safe and didn't have any unsafe experiences.

### **6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:**

**a.** How did you integrate into the culture and meet members of the community?

(e.g., clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

I joined Aikido club and made friends at the chat-room where I taught English to the Japanese students.

**b.** Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them.  
(e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

I didn't have any challenges regarding cultural differences (besides the language barrier); however, I did find the train system very complicated. I recommend learning about finding your way around in Japan using the railways before leaving.

## **7. FINANCIAL:**

**a.** What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?

Citibank allows you to transfer \$1,000 a day for about 4 times each quarter. However, they have account minimums and a lot of fees so please be careful when choosing this option.

**b.** How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

I recommend about 100,000 yen a month. If you want to travel and/or buy gifts for self and family I would recommend 150,000 yen a month.

**c.** Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

The cell phone bill at the end of my departure was very high due to cancellation fees.

**d.** If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any problems? If so, how did you address them?

Not applicable.

## **8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:**

**a.** If the IP&E administered your program/exchange, please comment on the effectiveness of the office's services. What service could be improved?

There office was very effective at doing their job. I can't think of any ways they could improve.

**b.** If the IP&E did not administer your program, please evaluate the program's administration, both in the U.S. and abroad.

**Not applicable.**

## **9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:**

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited.

This program is best suited for students who are very interested in the Japanese language and culture. Also, it helps if you like large city life. This part of Japan is very busy and can be crowded like New York City at times.

## **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

My expectations were very realistic. I traveled and saw many beautiful and amazing places in Japan. I was personally satisfied with the friends I made and experiences I had. The academic program was extremely challenging for me.

